6d 11

A

SERMON

Preached at the

Pariſh Church of *Solihull* in *Warwickſhire*,

DECEMBER 21. 1690.

On Occaſion of the Death of

ANNE,

The Wife of the

REVEREND and WORSHIPFUL

HENRY GRESWOLD,

Precentor of the Cathedral of *Lichfield*, &c.

And RECTOR of SOLIHULL aforeſaid.

By JOHN WRIGHT Maſter of Arts.

Τὸ μὴ πλουτῆσαι, πάντων ἡ πεπρωμένη κατέκλινε. Iſoc. ad Demonic.

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W. Musgrave.

BRITISH

TO THE

Reverend and Worſhipful

HENRY GRESWOLD,

Precentor of the Cathedral of *Lichfield*, &c.

Honoured Sir,

YOur late dear Conſort when ſhe diſcern'd the time of her departure to draw near, deſired that what was to be preached at her Funeral, might firſt entertain her own retired Meditations in the Chambers of Death, while her Soul was dreſſing up for Eternity. But ſince it pleas'd the Allwiſe God, to take her into happineſs, before I could miniſter to her Piety herein, I now bring theſe Leafs to lay upon her Herſe. I confeſs ſhe deſerv'd the greateſt honour that can be done to her Memory, and mine is the leaſt. But becauſe the deſign relates to one who was ſo near a Portion of your ſelf, I am willing to hope that you will give it ſome entertainment, and favourably reſent my writing

ting your Name at the Entrance. No body sure, can expect accuracy and fineness from one who is but an Underbuilder in God's House. Yet how mean soever it appears, I must acknowledge with all thankfulness, that the leisure I have for this and my other Studies, together with most of my Support, I owe to your Bounty and Favour. And besides my publickly declaring so, I can make no other return, but to beg of God Almighty, that he will please to prolong your days upon Earth, for the good of his Church, the benefit of your Country; and the more particular comfort of your Relations and Friends: and at the end of a Life full of Years and Honour, to receive your Soul into that Heavenly Choir, whither she is already gone, with whom you will rejoyce to sit and sing Allelujahs for evermore: which is the sincere and affectionate Prayer of

SIR,

Your mightily obliged, and
most Faithful Humble Servant.

JOHN WRIGHT.

Heb. ix. 27.

It is appointed for Men once to dye.

THE firſt thing which theſe Words ſuggeſt to our Meditations is Death, a very affrighting thing, formidable to human Nature, the mere mentioning of which, is enough to damp our Spirits, and the Careſſes of all ſenſual Delights and Satisfactions, quaſh all the Glee which we can find in any wild Frolicks or riotous Jollities; dim the luſtre of all Earthly Grandeurs and Beauties; over-cloud and darken all the Splendor and Glories of this World. And yet dye we muſt, it hath pleas'd God, by reaſon of Sin, to bring it upon all Mankind, to make it the neceſſary condition of our Nature in this Life, *For it is appointed for Men once to dye.*

That we may make the beſt improvement of theſe words we can. 1. Let us meditate what it is to dye. 2. Of the aſſuredneſs of Death to us all, *It is appointed for Men.* 3. The time when this ſhall befal us, we are *once*, at a certain time to dye. Laſtly, What may comfort us againſt the fear of Death.

1. What it is *to dye*; how we are to underſtand Death. Now this, according to the Senſe of all Mankind, confirm'd by the Goſpel, *is our removing out of this Life, our going into the next World, and our leaving theſe Earthly Tabernacles behind us, to return to the Duſt of the Earth whence they had their Original.*

1. It is *our removing out of this Life.* *Linquenda eſt Tellus,* * ſaith the Poet, *& domus & placens uxor atque harum quas colis arborum te præter inviſas Cupreſſos nulla brevem dominum ſequetur.* Thou muſt leave thy Land, and thy Dwelling, and thy pleaſing Wife; and of all thy Trees, none ſhall attend thee to thy Grave, but *Oak for thy Coffin.* † *A black Shirt was all that* Celadine *the Great carried to his Grave.* ‖ *And when* Ninus *went to Hell he took with him neither Gold, nor Horſe, nor Silver Chariot.* We are here but as *Strangers and Pilgrims* upon the Earth. This World is not our Home and Country, we are only to paſs through it, where *we have no abiding City.*

* *Horat. Carm. lib. 2. Od. 14.*

† *Fuller's Holy War.*

‖ *Dr. Taylor's Holy Dying, Cap. 1. Sect. 2.*

1 Pet. 2. 11.

This ſhould teach us to bear all the Evils of this Life with an even Mind, as remembring that we are upon our Journey, and have ſo fair a Country in our Proſpect, where we ſhall be happy, paſt all the Storms and Tempeſts; all the Doubts and Fears; all the Sins and Temptations; all the Pains and Cares of this troubleſom Pilgrimage, ſhall be ſafely landed in Heaven, where *all tears ſhall be wiped from our Eyes, and death and ſorrow ſhall be no more.*

Rev. 21. 4.

We ſhould hence alſo be careful, that we do not carry away out of this Life, (which we cannot always enjoy) ſuch Earthly Affections to it, ſuch gaſpings for it, ſuch lookings back after it, as may make us miſerable in the next, when we are parted from it. The other World does not alter the Temper and Diſpoſition of Mind which a Man carries with him: *He that is filthy will be filthy ſtill, and he that is unrighteous will be unrighteous ſtill.* And we are not certain that we ſhall not take with us ſenſual Appetites, when we remove from ſenſible Objects. Old age does not cure wanton Deſires in bad Men; nor envious Paſſions, nor worldly Affections; nay, theſe rather encreaſe as the

Rev. 22. 11.

the Body decays. And then we may well believe, that a Man carries the Earthly Paſſions and Inclinations of his Mind along with him; and it muſt needs be a torment in the other State, and poſſeſs the Soul with vexation and reſtleſsneſs, to deſpair of ever enjoying that which only it has an ardent Affection after.

2. *'Tis our going into the next World*, our entring upon a new ſtate of Life, where there will be neither Marrying nor Building, nor Food nor Raiment, nor Ploughing nor Sowing, nor Buying nor Selling, nor Sitting nor Walking, nor Heat nor Cold; but a new World of Spiritual Beings. We are told glorious things of the happineſs of that State, but withal, that it is like nothing which *we have ſeen or heard, or can conceive.* And no wonder, ſince 'tis the entertainment and employment of Angels and Spirits, whereas all our notices come by Senſe. While we are in this Body, we can have no Notions from any thing but what is Material, and can affect our Senſes; and can no more underſtand an Inviſible World, and Immaterial Inhabitants, than a Man born blind can Colours; he may believe there are ſuch, and may hear Perſons diſcourſe learnedly about 'em, but they cannot be repreſented to him any way, whereby he can have an Idea of them. So that we cannot conceive how we ſhall be when we have parted with our Bodies, and left them behind us; what will be our employment, or ſhall ſo much as firſt preſent it ſelf to us; how we can be able to diſcern and diſtinguiſh Spirits, or converſe with 'em; whither it is we are to go, ſince no Place as ſuch can affect a Soul; wherein the happineſs of that State conſiſts. The knowledge of which things, while all our Intelligence is to come by Senſe, cannot be conveyed to us.

Hence then were it wiſe in us to comply with all our Saviour's Directions, for the faſhioning of our Minds, and to practiſe all thoſe Graces and Vertues he requires of us; as eaſily ſuppoſing, that ſuch Habits and Diſpoſitions of Mind are neceſſary for us to reliſh the Happineſs of that ſtate. For there are many degrees and inſtances of Vertue required from us, which are not neceſſary to, nay, ſcarce conſiſtent with the happy and proſperous Condition of this World, or our living in it: For we are *not to love it*, we are *to live above it*; to ſtifle and ſuppreſs not only the extravagant and irregular, but even *the natural Appetites of the Body*, and *to deſpiſe the Pleaſures of it*, *ſubduing the Fleſh to the Spirit*; *to enjoy this World* with that great indifferency, *as if we enjoy'd it not*; *to have our converſation in Heaven*, *all our joys and affections*, *our treaſure and hearts there*; *to love our Enemies*, *and thoſe who hate us and deſpitefully uſe us*; *to forgive Injuries*; *not to retaliate Evil for Evil*, *but the contrary*: Which things we cannot think why our Saviour ſhould require from us, were it not that that Temper of Mind which theſe Vertues form in us, is neceſſary to prepare us for the happineſs of the other Life; and ſo far as we abate of them, ſo far ſhall we fall ſhort of our Felicity in that State.

As for the Miſeries of it, we may well believe, that they alſo are more than any thing *we have ſeen*, *or felt*, *or can conceive*. They are repreſented by * *Lakes of fire and brimſtone*; and though Fire cannot hurt a Soul, yet if ſuch Expreſſions be Metaphorical, what will thoſe ſufferings be that are real!

* Rev. 20. 15. & 21. 8.

Thus *to dye* is to enter into the ſtrange Regions, and new ſtate of the other Life.

3. 'Tis *our leaving theſe earthly Tabernacles behind us*, *to return to duſt*; our Bodies to ſleep in the Earth, tho' our Souls have taken their flight from it. With reference

to

to theſe was it ſaid, * *Duſt thou art, and to duſt ſhalt thou return.* Yet 'tis but for a time, and † *though it be ſown a natural Body, it ſhall be rais'd a Spiritual*; for * *Fleſh and Blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God, neither can corruption inherit incorruption.* Theſe earthly Bodies which we live in, cannot ſubſiſt in that pure Light and glorious Region where God dwells; and therefore to be fit to inherit Glory, they muſt at the laſt day be ſpiritualiz'd, free from all ſublunary Paſſions, to reliſh none of the Pleaſures of Fleſh and Blood; and the more they are refin'd here from Fleſhly Appetites and Earthly Inclinations, the more glorious will they riſe again.

* Gen. 3. 19.
† 1 Cor. 15. 44.
* Ver. 50.

1. This again ſhould wean our Minds from all ſenſual Pleaſures and worldly Affections. For if we can like nothing but theſe things, what ſhall we do when we come to leave 'em, when they cannot be had? For whatever clothing our Souls may have, yet Fleſh and Blood they ſhall not. And altho' when our Bodies fall from us into Duſt, the particular Deſires and ſlighter Inclinations of 'em may poſſibly depart from us, (as we ſee in long and tedious ſickneſſes and auſterities, Men care not much for bodily Pleaſures:) Yet when the Soul is ſenſualiz'd (as it is in old Sinners, tho' the Body be decay'd) and can eſteem no other; 'tis uncapable of any happineſs among Spirits, or in a Body that is Spiritualiz'd and Glorified. By how much therefore our Inclinations are ſunk into Fleſh and Senſe, by ſo much are we indiſpos'd for the happineſs of the next Life, which doth not conſiſt in 'em; and the more Spiritual our Nature is, the more is it prepared for the Glories that ſhall be revealed.

2. We ſhould not hence pride our ſelves too much about our Bodies, —— Either as to their *Deſcent*, ſince our Pedigree is all alike Antient, and no one knows what

what ſort of Perſons his Anceſtors may have been, however we know what we all in a ſhort time muſt be.

Or as to their *Beauty*, which if it be not overvalued, but real, ſoon whithereth away like Graſs; whereas Grace and Goodneſs gives the moſt pleaſing Air to our very Aſpect, ſuch as no Beauty Natural or Artificial can come near. However 'tis but a little while till we ſhall not know the difference betwixt the Duſt of one Perſon and another.

Or as to their *Apparel*, which beſides that it often but indifferently ſets off the Perſon (the plaineſt Dreſs according to Peoples Quality being moſt becoming) can be of no uſe in the other Life to cover a Man's Soul.

Or that we have an *Eſtate* to provide more largely for them than others have; or can pamper them more: Yet for all this they will fall into Duſt, and the ſooner ordinarily for our too much Indulging.

Laſtly, we ſhould believe according to the Scriptures, that our Bodies ſhall ſpring up again more glorious at the Reſurrection, and in the mean time they are ſaid in Scripture *to be aſleep*. The Soul muſt all the while be in an imperfect State without the Body, and is not compleatly happy till they meet each other again, to live in perpetual Harmony and Pleaſures, to which glorified Bodies will be highly Inſtrumental. But if we make our Bodies the Servants of Sin, and they carry to their Graves fleſhly Luſts and ſenſual Affections,

* Dan. 12. 2. * *they will riſe to ſhame and everlaſting contempt.*

Thus we have heard what it is *to dye*. In what ſenſe we are to underſtand Death, that we do not then ceaſe to be. And methinks when we ſee the Body of a worthy Friend or Relation lie before us, pale and without Senſe or Motion, who but few Hours ſince, may be, was our Support and Comfort; we cannot conceive that this muſt be all of the Perſon, but that the Soul is

alive

alive ſomewhere, tho' we did not ſee it go, nor what Company did attend it, nor what a State or Place it paſs'd into.

2. I proceed to the next thing, The aſſuredneſs of Death to us all, *It is appointed for us.*

Of this all Mankind is a Proof by the ſucceſſion of Generations. And our ſelves ſee that thoſe who live the oldeſt, yet Death follows them cloſe at the Heels, and at laſt gives them the fatal ſtroke. There have been two indeed excepted ſince the beginning of the World; but no more will till the end of it, and then ſaith St. *Paul*, * *We that are alive ſhall be changed.* * 1 Cor. 15. 51.

Sin is the Cauſe of this, for † *Death came into the world by it*, and * *in Adam all dye.* † Rom. 5. 12. * 1 Cor. 15. 22.

Had we been made Spirits at firſt, we had had no Principles of Mortality in us; and it had been hard to have depriv'd us of our Natures, and to have made us mortal for one Man's Sin, without our fault. But we were made of Fleſh and Blood, of the Duſt of the Earth, and ſubject therefore by Nature to Diſſolution and Corruption; for that which is made of Duſt, may ſure be reſolv'd into it again. And ſince it pleas'd God to deprive our firſt Parents, becauſe of their Sin, of that Supernatural Priviledge of the Tree of Life, which was granted them alone for a Sacrament or an Aſſurance of Immortality, we have no wrong done us. For human Nature is, and always was, in its Frame Mortal. *Adam*'s Body, even in Paradiſe, was in it ſelf as vulnerable, as capable of a violent Death, or being prejudic'd by infectious Airs as ours are; tho' it was more ſecured from them. But now ſince *Sin* is come forth into the World, and Men have corrupted their Nature by it, and are left to their own Counſels, to injure themſelves and one another by violence and exceſs, and to the Contingencies of things, there muſt needs be Death, tho' we could

could get a Preſervative againſt all the decays of Nature. So true is it that *Sin brought Death into the world.* And 'tis as true, that he will now never leave coming to our Doors, till he has fetcht us one after another all away.

And indeed conſidering this fallen and Apoſtate ſtate of the World, an Immortal Life were not deſireable in it, tho' our Bodies might be preſerv'd by a Miracle, and Mankind did not too much encreaſe. For ſhort as it is, a little while gives wiſe Men enough of it, but then it would be intolerable, and it has pleas'd God to provide a better Place for us.

Now the aſſuredneſs that we muſt all *dye*, that the pale Meſſenger muſt ſhortly cloſe our Eyes, and fill us full with Duſt and Clay, ſhould cool our deſires after this World; teach us when we have enough; ſhew us that theſe are not the Riches of a Soul, which muſt ſhortly change this Life; and put us upon an early Preparation for Death, leſt we render our Lives uncomfortable for fear of it, and be affrighted and in Agonies, when it comes within view, and we ſee it approach us.

3. The time when Death will befal us. We are *once*, at a certain time *to dye. It is appointed for men once to dye.*

When and where, and how each of us ſhall depart this World, the All-knowing God foreſees, and has certainly determined. For we cannot ſuppoſe it to be unknown or unreſolv'd with him, how he will proportion our Lives, and what our Death ſhall be. And,

* Mat. 10.30. * *if the very hairs of our Head*, then aſſuredly all our days *are numbred.*

Therefore with reference to the Period of Human Life we are told, *Job* 14. 5. *That the days of man are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou haſt appointed his bounds that he cannot paſs.* And *Job* 7. 1. *Is there not an appointed time to man upon Earth? are not his days*

days like the days of an hireling? And if we will allow God, who governs the World, to order and dispose all Events in it, according to his Will and Counsel, and by his disappointing or giving success to things, to be the Author of all the Good or Evil which happens to Mankind; (as the Scripture makes him) * *If a Sparrow does not fall to the Ground without him*, much less shall Man, *who*, as our Saviour teacheth, is *of more value than many of 'em.* † *My times*, saith *David*, *are in thy hands.* No Man can depart from this World, no more than he can be born into it without his particular Providence. No one can be guilty of his own murder, but by God's forsaking him and giving the Man up to himself; no sickness or distemper shall prove mortal, but when God pleases it shall; no Wrath or Malice of Men can destroy us but when God permits them, and then he is said to deliver up a Man into the Hands of his Enemy; no Wars, Pestilence and Famine but are sent by God, and directed by him where to strike. Since then the Providence of God does peculiarly over-rule and determine all Events, and especially the end of Man's days here on Earth, and withal foreknows whatever shall come to pass; we are then to believe, that all things shall move on in that certain Track which God foresees and has appointed, and that no one shall dye sooner, nor live longer than that Period which God in his wise Predestination has determined for us. Not but that God often prolongs the Life of the Righteous, and cuts off the wicked Doers, as the Scriptures frequently assure us. But then they assure us too, that God hath ordain'd the Righteous to be such, and to leave the Wicked to their own Devices, as the means of that their longer or shorter time, which accordingly God hath fore-determined. So that our using or neglecting those of Religion and a Holy Life, as well as other ways of Self-preservation are neither in vain for the lengthening or lessening our

* Ver. 29.

† Psal. 31. 15.

Race here, nor yet alter, but purſue and compaſs the Goal which God hath prefix'd us. Thus is that Matter reſolv'd which *Beverovicius* the Learned Phyſician was ſo much concern'd about.

But then it is a thing which ſome would be glad to know, *viz. The number of their days, and the time we have for yet to live*; and could we tell them, they were to hold out yet fifty or ſixty years, it might be glad Tydings; and then they would let looſe all the Reins to Sin. But if all that muſt dye betimes knew ſo, how would it damp and chill their Spirits, fill the reſt of the World with mourning, caſt a Veil over all the Comforts of Life, and put a ſtop to all their Induſtry in it! For what would become of all Arts and Sciences, Trades and Education, if Perſons knew they were to dye, by that time they had made any Improvement or Progreſs? And ſo a great part of Mankind would lay aſide the neceſſary buſineſs of Life, which I believe no dying Perſons would much concern themſelves for; and Religion be little minded but againſt the time of Death.

As to the Bounds which God has ſet to human Life in general; *Moſes* tells us that in his time * *the days of man's age were ſeventy years.* And in the ordinary courſe of Nature, our Bodies cannot hold out much more; all beyond is labour and ſorrow. When Mankind were few they liv'd longer; but now the World is ſtockt with Inhabitants, ſhould our Anceſtors, who liv'd Seven or eight hunder'd years ago, and their immediate Children and Grand-children, down to our times, be alive now to enjoy their Eſtates, the preſent Generation muſt needs be Beggars, would not know where nor how to live; and wickedneſs might come to the ſame paſs as it did in the Old World, when there was *but one righteous Family left*; the moſt probable Cauſe whereof was the length of their Lives. Whereas the ſhortning of them, has made Men more governable; ſets Heaven and Hell at a nearer diſtance, encourages good men

* Pſal. 90. 10.

men thereby to perſevere, and ſooner removes thoſe who are bad. In a word, our Lives are long enough to prepare our ſelves for Heaven, and if we are ſoon removed thither I hope it is no loſs, eſpecially to ſo great a part of mankind who live in pains and ſorrows, want and drudgery, to whom the ſhortneſs of Life is a Comfort. For ſo we find *Job* moſt paſſionately expreſſing himſelf, *Wherefore is light given to him that is in miſery, and life to the bitter in Soul? which long for death, but it cometh not, and dig for it more than for hid treaſures; which rejoyce exceedingly, and are glad when they can find the Grave*, Job 3. 20, 21, 22. *My Soul chuſeth ſtrangling and death rather than life, I loath it, I would not live always; let me alone for my days are vanity*, Job 7. 15, 16.

Since then it has pleas'd God to bring down the ordinary term of our Life to Seventy years or thereabouts, if we could attain unto it, as few do.

1. We ſhould hence learn ſome end of our Cares, and not have our Hearts and Deſires conſtantly intent and eager after Money, and increaſing our Eſtates to the laſt gaſp, as if there were no Life but in them. For this exceeds the covetouſneſs of that laborious rich man in the Goſpel, who knew when he had enough, and * *to take his eaſe.* But bethink our ſelves what proviſion we have made for our Souls, againſt they † *are turned out of theſe earthly habitations*; what * *Treaſures we have laid up in Heaven*; what good we have done in the World; how uſeful we have been in our Generation; how kind to our Neighbours; or rather, how few naked Backs we have clothed; how few empty Bellies we have filled; how few languiſhing Bowels we have refreſhed; how few good Works we have rewarded. And yet how many Rich men may we obſerve in the World, who part with Money to the Poor as it were Blood out of their Veins; repining at ordinary expences; raging at a loſs or miſchance; tenacious and narrow to thoſe about them? What ſor-

* Luk. 12. 19.
† Luk. 16. 9.
* Mat 6. 20.

did Practices and dishonourable Shifts they'll take up with to save? how tamely they can sit under the lash of Tongues, and content under an ill Name? In a word, What Slaves they can be to worldly things? not forbear God's own day, nor, as *Solomon* speaks, are they * *suffer'd to take rest in the night.* And lastly, What Glory has God had from all? Whereas a little will serve us while we live; and such a competent Provision for Children, as may encourage their Industry and Vertue (tho' not maintain them in Idleness and Vice) may be a just reason for our care; but to make them Rich and Great is not: And yet many Persons are never contented with Earth till they are laid in it; neither live belov'd, nor dye lamented. And this is the more to be pitied, when it befalls any of those who, for their other Endowments, might have been the delight and pride of their Country.

* Eccles. 5. 12.

2. We should likewise bethink our selves, how our Lives shorten every day; and how near we may be got to the common Period of Man's Life. It may be there are but a few years behind, and then at least we must begin to mind what we came hither for, and to do it, or else we shall soon be in everlasting Torments. And when we have past through the remaining Scenes and Stages of Life in Vertue and Honour, and have got the taste and relish of this World out of our Minds, have no hankerings after it, and can live without it, and are approaching into the Confines of Eternity; we should not be apt to think of the melancholy State of our Bodies, which are left to putrifie in their Graves till the Resurrection; but of the glories and pleasures of another Life to which we are a going, which will raise our desires after it, and take off the natural Aversions to Death.

We must *once dye*, saith the Text, after that *we shall dye no more, Death hath no more dominion over us.* Some we read of in the Gospel, who were rais'd from the Dead to live here anew, and such were fain to dye again. But this

his we must not expect, after once we are dead, have parted with these Earthly Bodies, gone into another Life, ever to return into this World again to amend. We then pass into an Immortal and Irreversible state of Rewards and Punishments. The only time then we have *to work out our Salvation*, is while we are in these Bodies, * *For we must be judg'd according to the things done in them.* Let wicked Men therefore look to it betimes, and get such Habits and Dispositions of Mind, as may make their Souls happy when they depart hence. For if Mens earthly Natures are to be spiritualiz'd and refin'd, before they can be fit to live in the presence of God in Glory; it must be only those Graces and Vertues which come from Heaven to adorn our Souls here, as must carry us up thither. But if † *with prophane Esau they will* for worldly enjoyments *sell their Birth-right*; *i. e.* their Right and Title to eternal Glory, *when they come to inherit the Blessing* annexed to it, *they'll find no place for Repentance*, *i. e.* no altering God Almighty, no changing or reversing their Case, *tho' they seek it carefully with tears*; for so neither could *Esau* make *Isaac* reverse his.

* 2 Cor. 5. 10.

† Heb. 12. 16, 17.

Indeed Men may so far harden themselves in Sin, and reject all the means which God uses for their amendment, as that at last he may before Death withdraw his Spirit from them, give them up to their own Counsels, and the Government of Evil Spirits. And the hardness of the *Israelties* was such that God cast them out of the care of his good Providence, left them to wander, and at last to dye in the Wilderness, and * *sware in his wrath that they should never enter into his rest.* Of like Persons did our Saviour speak, † *That the Kingdom of God should be taken from them, and given to a Nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.* We are likewise told of Apostates from the Christian Religion to Paganism; that 'tis † *impossible to renew* their Baptismal Grace, and receive *them again to repentance*; that * *there remaineth no more sacrifice for their sin, but a certain fearful looking for of Judgment and fiery Indignation*: and S. *John* discourages Christians from † *praying* for those who were fallen into it, calling it *a sin unto death*; and therefore upon

* Heb. 3. 11. Psal. 95. 11.

* Mat. 21. 43.

† Heb. 6. 4, 5, 6.

* Heb. 10. 26, 27.

† 1 Joh. 5. 16.

*Verse 21. upon diſſwades us from the * *Pagan Idolatry*; but otherwiſe God does not deny his Grace and Mercy to any one in this Life who will accept of it.

Nay, if a Man believes God's Mercy in Chriſt to penitent Sinners, and upon ſuch a Belief repents and lives a Holy Life; if the Man ſhould dye deſponding his own Caſe, and hope for no Salvation by Jeſus Chriſt, we have no reaſon to think that God will condemn him, becauſe he upon a miſtake will condemn himſelf, no more than he will ſave that wicked Perſon who dyes, believing all ſhall go well with him.

But now Death puts a ſtop to all our Opportunities, and cuts off the hopes of wicked Men: they muſt then abide under the wrath and vengeance of God for ever; and are reſerved in a miſerable Eſtate for the Judgment of the *Great Day*, when there will be the final Conſummation of Rewards and Puniſhments for evermore.

This ſhould therefore put us upon doing all the good we can, while the day of Salvation laſteth, before the diſmal Night comes upon us, which for ought we know, may be within this Week, and after that no more trial, for *we muſt dye but once.* † *Be ye therefore ready*, ſaith our Saviour, for *the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.* We may be cut off on a ſudden, ſeiz'd with diſtraction or dulneſs, ſo as not to be able ſo much as *to ſet our Houſe in order.* And tho' Men by a ſtrange partiality, are apt to fancy to themſelves that they ſhall live as long as any body uſes to do; yet we ſee they are often miſtaken. When and where, and in what manner we ſhall dye God has conceal'd from us, to engage us to conſtant Watchfulneſs and an early Piety. And who then would have his Heart ſet upon this World, who knows not how ſoon his Head may be laid low, how ſoon he may be turn'd out of his Earthly Tenement? it may be to morrow for ought he knows, yea * *This night his Soul may be taken from him*; and then with our Life the day of Grace ends. † *Wherefore*, as the Holy Ghoſt ſaith, *to day if ye will hear his voyce, harden not your hearts.* And ſince our Bleſſed Lord will reward all the good Offices we do for him, ſo that

† Mat. 24. 44.

* Luk. 12. 20.

† Heb. 3. 7, 8.

a Cup

a Cup of cold water given for his name sake, shall not lose its reward. We may get to be *rich in good works*; for the more we do, the more we shall be rewarded; and God will proportion our Glories, according as we have improv'd our Talents and Opportunities to do good here, and have *laid up our treasures with him.* Now this shews Men, besides the hazard they run, what they lose, by not beginning the Service of God early. Nor can they rationally think, that they who begin to live well at the latter end of their time, should have an equal reward with those * *who have*, as the Gospel says to another purpose, *born all the heat of the day*, have served God all their Life: Nor that they who do but little, should be as well rewarded, as they who have done a thousand times more good: Which is also contrary to what our Lord delivers in those Parables concerning † *a Nobleman travelling into a far Country, who delivered to his Servants his Goods, to each according to his several ability to improve for him, and at his return rewarded every one proportionably according to his works.*

Mat. 10. 42.

* Mat. 20. 12.

† Mat. 25. 14. Luk. 19. 12.

But tho' some Men are contented to be least in the Kingdom of Heaven, and care not how late they prepare for it, nor how little a share they have in the Glories there, so they can have any; and it is well if such indifferent Persons ever can. Yet there are others who do not mind it so much, and scarce ever in good earnest think of another Life, till their Souls are falling into it; and then, it may be, they sadly lament their Folly, in that they prefer'd the deluding Scenes of this World, before the compleat and endless Glories of the other; and this they are apt to call Repentance, but is too often only a Conscience distracted with a sense of its own Guilt, and the fearful expectations of the Divine Vengeance. These Men part with their Sins, as many do with their Charity; not while they live and can keep it themselves, but when it cannot be reckoned among the Actions of their Lives. Lord, what Horrors and Agonies are they many times in! What Vows and Promises of better Obedience! and no doubt, sometimes sincere and hearty, as

is

is plain in some few who have recover'd. Now in this Case there is certainly very great hazard, and therefore no less madness for any of us to leave our Salvation to it; as the World of Christian Writers do generally, (I suppose) conclude, and divers of them and those of the first Magnitude, that it is at least next to desperate. And I confess Justification by Faith only, seems principally to respect our entring the Baptismal Covenant, yet sure Charity will not determine that it does so absolutely and solely, but rather find reason to hope that the All-wise God, who foreseeth all future Contingencies, and the Effects of things in their Causes, while he discerneth in a penitent sick Person a true Μετάνοια, or change of mind, such as if the Man liv'd would be productive of a good Life, will mercifully accept according to what a Man hath, and not according to what he hath not; as he graciously does of the Faith and Repentance of those who fall into Sin after Baptism, but through an unexpected Death, do not live to pursue their good Purposes and Resolutions. And why should that be such a difference in the State of a Man's Soul, where the Principle of a new Life is arriv'd to a like degree in both; that their deaths are alike near, but in the one not thought so?

* Jam. 5. 15. We read of the Sick * *whose sins shall be forgiven* before recovery. And our own Church obligeth us to absolve the sick Person after Confession, *if he humbly and heartily desire it, though his Conscience be troubled with weighty Matters.* And this we do not only for those who may recover (though if they do the Absolution is past) but in the Case of such Malefactors who we are sure will not. And there are many Promises in the Gospel to encourage us in so doing † *If any man sin*, saith St. *John*, *we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins* * *So God loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, to the end that all that believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting Life.* And all those Places of Scripture which represent † *Jesus Christ to come into the world to save Sinners*, And if this be meant

† Joh. 2. 1, 2.

* Joh. 3. 16.

† 1 Tim. 1. 15.

meant of Penitent Sinners believing on him, who renounce every Evil way, and will effectually serve him in a good Life, if they live; why, such are those suppos'd to be we speak of: And yet their end must needs be very tragical, since no Man can be sure (tho' God is) at that time, whether he is one of them.

4. We proceed to the last thing, What may comfort us against the fear of Death. Now this may be resolv'd according to those several Notions wherein Men fear it.

1. If we consider Death, as 'tis *a leaving these earthly Tabernacles behind us* to dissolution. Men are loth to dye; Nature shrinks at it; Body and Soul are not willing to part; * *Skin for skin*, saith Satan truly, *yea all that a man hath will he give for his life.* Men would naturally fain live; † *Light is sweet*, saith the wise Man, *and a pleasant thing it is for the Eyes to behold the Sun*; but very unpleasant to have our Life go from us; to return unto the Earth; to be dissolv'd; 'tis against the decency which human Nature delighteth in, for us to fall into Corruption, and the deformities of Death, and the dishonours of a Grave; and it is against the most natural and general instinct of Self-preservation. Now if we enquire into the bottom of all this; we shall find, Men are chiefly afraid that Death puts an end to their Being, or that the next Life will not please them. But they need not fear, since our Saviour hath discovered to us, that there is another glorious World, which our Souls shall pass into; and a state of happiness *above any thing we can conceive here*, which we shall enjoy, *without dying any more.* We are assured, that when we leave this Tabernacle of Flesh, we shall enter upon a more glorious Scene of things; new and suprizing Wonders will present themselves to our view, upon our first passage into it, which are here concealed from us; and * *We shall have building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens.* We should not therefore have our Thoughts always dwell amongst Tombs, and of the

* Job 2. 4.

† Eccles. 11. 7.

* 2 Cor. 5. 1.

condition of our Bodies for a while in the Grave; but upon that bleſſed Country we are deſign'd for, and the happy World to which we are going; and this will make our leaving this Life eaſie to us, when we muſt change it for Heaven; and to be of St. *Paul*'s mind, after he had *a glimpſe of the heavenly glory, deſirous to be diſſolv'd, and to be with Chriſt, which is far better.* And although we cannot form any Notions of the condition or happineſs of the next Life; *For 'tis above any thing we can think, and Fleſh and Blood cannot inherit it*; yet we may be well aſſured, that God will provide ſuch Pleaſures as will be ſuitable for us in that ſtate, and ſhall make us happy for ever. As for our Bodies, they will be in the mean time without Senſe, and ſo not capable of any Enjoyments or Miſery; but God will take care of them, and * *though they be ſown in Corruption*, he will *raiſe them in Incorruption*; *tho' they be ſown in diſhonour, they ſhall be rais'd in Glory.*

*1 Cor. 15. 42, 43.

2. If we conſider Death, as it is *our removing out of this Life*; Men are loth to leave it, would be very willing to ſtay, eſpecially if their Condition be any thing comfortable in it: here they meet with what an Earthly Nature chiefly deſires and delights in; what ſupplies all their Needs, and pleaſures all their Senſes; and are therefore well contented as they be; do not deſire to remove, or to change Worlds; unwilling to be taken from their beloved Enjoyments, Eſtates, Dwellings, Buſineſs, Family, Recreations; and to leave behind them all which their Nature takes pleaſure and ſatisfaction in; and therefore who can blame them, that they are afraid of Death, which takes them away from all their Comforts in this Life?

But alaſs, theſe Men ſhould conſider, that we are to be here but as Travellers or Inmates; we are not to tarry; it is not *our abiding Place*; this is not our Inheritance, but a tranſitory Scene which cannot laſt. Our Bodies themſelves do ſoon fall to decay, and in a while to Duſt, and the* *whole world will at laſt break out into a univerſal Flame.* Therefore we ſhould have a care, that we do not ſet our Hearts too

* 2 Pet. 3. 10.

too much upon it, leſt Lakes of Fire be prepared for us. And this makes Afflictions ſometimes neceſſary: Yet if it ſhould pleaſe God to ſend us none, but that we had all the happineſs which could be heaped upon us here; we have no Cauſe to complain, if we muſt change the tranſitory ſatisfactions of this World, for the more noble and laſting Pleaſures of the next. And what diſadvantage is it to be removed to a better Place and more happy Life?

As ſoon as ever the Soul has taken her flight from the Body, and has left this Life, ſhe enters into a new and more glorious ſtate than ever the Sun ſaw; enlarges her Proſpect, and views and admires the Glories and Beauties of that happy Place; and ſo rejoyces in the Pleaſures of it, that it were worſe than death to return hither again. 'Tis ſaid of the New *Jeruſalem*, that * *there ſhall be no curſe in it*, nothing to imbitter that State, *but the Throne of God, and of the Lamb ſhall be in it, and his Servants ſhall ſerve him. And they ſhall ſee his Face, and there ſhall be no Night, nor need of a Candle, neither light of the Sun, nor of the Moon to ſhine in it; for the Glory of God lightens it, where they ſhall reign for ever and ever.* And altho' we cannot tell now how theſe things will affect us; to be ſure no wicked Man can be happy in God's Preſence, for there is ſuch an unlikeneſs and contrariety in impure and polluted Souls to the infinitely holy God, that 'tis impoſſible there ſhould be any friendly Communication between them: he is not *a God*, ſaith the *Pſalmiſt*, *who hath pleaſure in wickedneſs, neither can evil dwel with him*; and || *what communion*, ſaith the Apoſtle, *hath light with darkneſs?* But yet to a generous and Vertuous Mind, what can be more delightful, than to have our Underſtandings entertain'd with a clear ſight of the firſt and beſt Being? to admire his Wiſdom, and to behold his Glory, to dwell immediately in his Preſence, and continually attend upon his Throne? to be in ſpecial favour with our Bleſſed Lord *in the place he hath prepared for us*? to enter into the perpetual Society and Friendſhip of the Holy Angels, to whom we ſhall be made

* Rev. 21. 23. & 22. 3, 4, 5.

|| 2 Cor. 6. 14.

* Luk. 20. 36. Heb. 12. 23. *equal*, and * *the Spirits of just men made perfect*, many of our dear Relations and intimate Acquaintance, whom probably we shall know again; with all those brave and worthy Souls whom we have seen or heard of; and all the Blessed Inhabitants of those most glorious Regions? to converse with them freely, without any folly or disguise, or those Passions which spoil the Comfort, and disturb the Peace of Mankind? Nay, when *we enter into our Master's joy*, we shall have cause to say, as the Queen of *Sheba* of the Glory of *Solomon*, that *not the half of it was ever told us*. And as Heaven is *an exceeding, so 'tis an eternal weight of Glory*; *as in God's presence there is fulness of joy*; Psal. 16. 11. *so at his right hand there shall be pleasures for evermore.*

Now since *we cannot see God and live*, (for who ever could see a Spirit?) since these Joys are too big for our poor Capacities, too pure for Flesh and Blood, too strong for our weak Natures to bear; this should reconcile us to Death, and welcome that blessed Hour, when we shall pass into the next Life with Comfort, have our Souls rais'd to their full strength and activity, *enter the promised Land*, meet our Blessed Saviour with Crowns of Glory in his 1 Thes. 4. 17. hands for us, and *then we shall ever be with the Lord.*

This is not only enough to mortifie all our Affections Rom. 14. 17. for this World, but necessarily requires it. *For the Kingdom of God is not meat and drink*, consists not in such entertainments which this World gives us; we shall find nothing there to gratifie sensual Appetites and worldly Inclinations. We should therefore procure to our selves such Dispositions of Mind, as God thinks *meet for us to be made partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints in light*; endeavour *to be like God, if we would see him as* * 1 Joh. 3. 2, 3. *he is*; and * *he that hath this hope in him*, saith the Apostle, *purifieth himself even as he is pure*; *have our Conversation in Heaven, and not upon the Earth*; *set our Affections on things above, and not on things below*; *use this world*, with that indifferency, *as if we used it not, because the fashion thereof passeth away*; and then we shall be contented

contented and fit to leave it, as a wayfaring Traveller to return into his own Country.

3. If we consider Death, *as our going into the next World*, Men are apt to be afraid of it, not knowing what may become of them, how God may dispose of their Souls.

Now this can no way be helpt, but *by giving all diligence to make our Calling and Election sure*; *by ceasing to do evil, and learning to do well*; by leading innocent and vertuous lives; *by laying up Treasures in Heaven*, which may provide for us, *when we are turned out of these earthly Habitations*. In a word, to live so, *that our Hearts may not condemn us*; *and then we shall have confidence towards God*. Thus when a Man who has lived well all his time, comes to die, with what Peace and comfort can he resign his Soul into the Hands of God! With what ease can he part with this Life! How vain and empty, how like Pageantry and a Shew do these things appear as they pass from him! How wean'd from all the Pomps and Vanities of this World! With how little Terror can he behold Death approaching! or rather, with what joy does he go to meet the Bridegroom of his Soul! How willing to go to the place where our blessed Saviour is, who died for him! No melancholy Fears, nor storms of Conscience discompose his inward Peace: He takes a Religious Farewell of his Family and Neighbours that come to see him, with a Charitable Concern for all his Fellow Christians; and the present Calmness and Tranquility of his Mind, are the joyful Beginnings and Dawnings of that everlasting Rest he is going to. *O, who would not so live that he may die the death of the Righteous, and have his latter end like his.*

Isa. 1. 16. 17.

1 Joh. 3. 21.

And now my Discourse upon the Text must needs cease, this so naturally carrying my Thoughts to the consideration of another in Exemplification of it: I mean the deceased Gentlewoman, whose Funeral we here Commemorate. Ye have heard of Death in the

Theory

Theory; but she presents it to the life: and should not only affect, but warn us; because we shall all enter into the like darksome Shades. I confess I find Funeral Panegyricks to be very ancient. For according to *Anaximenes*, *Solon*, that wise *Grecian*, instituted them to the *Atheuians*: And *Plutarch* tells us, that *Valerius Publicola* begun the same among the *Romans*; which were so approved, that in the Days of *Camillus* they were appointed to adorn the Obsequies of Honourable Women by an Order of the Senate. And when they are for deserving Persons, bring great Glory to God, are a meet Reward to the Memory of the Deceased, and both an Admonition and Encouragement to those who survive. And here I had a large Field before me to have expatiated in for these purposes; but must disappoint Peoples Expectations of my saying much, being more than once particularly desired by her that I would not: hereby shewing her self (suitable to all the rest of her Life) free from any desire of Applause or Ostentation. I shall therefore only describe some of those greater Lines of her Conversation, wherein she was extreamly commendable.

1. *Such as have been observed* (tho' rarely together) *in other vertuous Women*, namely,

An extraordinary diligence in her Family; was discreet and thoughtful in the Government of it; a Prudent and Faithful Wife; a Tender Mother to her Children; willing to provide for them, as far as was consistent with the Obligations of Piety and Charity: otherwise as for her self, she could be content, if it so pleased God, (she has sometimes said) to live in a Cottage, often commending the Happiness that might attend such a retired State; and would upon due occasions manifest a generous Contempt of worldly Things. But as one that was the * Grand-daughter, || Daughter, and Wife of a Minister, was most especially regardful of her Childrens Souls, instructing them in Religion, and the Duty which God

* *Of Mr.* John Richardson, *Minister of* Ratcliffe *upon the* Reake *in* Leicestershire.

|| *Of Mr.* Samuel Marshal, *Minister of* Dodford *in* Northamptonshire.

God requires from 'em; particularly cautioning them from time to time, never to take to that Unbred and Unchriſtian Diſpoſition, which has been too peculiar to many Perſons, if not Families of this Place, to love to hear and tell evil Stories of the Vices or Misfortunes of one another; which if true, were fitter to be lamented; and yet when they have not known the truth of things, would be willing to believe and ſpeak the worſt; a Quality ſhe had ever a juſt Reſentment againſt. She was glad of any opportunity to hear the Younger read, duly minding them of their Prayers; enjoining this in her Will to all her Children, as a Condition of her Legacies, That they ſhall ſay their Prayers upon their Knees, at the leaſt twice every Day. She was kind to her Servants; careful of them when they were ſick; apt to adviſe them.

Was mightily helpful and good to her ſick Neighbours, or when they were otherways amiſs; always coveted to make Peace among them; her ſelf ſhewing them a good Example of forgetting Injuries. Of an affable and gentle Carriage, obliging Perſons by the much becoming modeſty and handſomneſs of it: Very lowly and mean in her own Eyes, rather too much diſtruſting her own Abilities. So exactly Juſt, that ſhe would ſometimes rather pay twice, than lie under the ſuſpicion of wronging any one once. As to her Charity in giving, that we may well ſpeak to, ſince twice a Week all are ſerved that come. Fair in her Dealings; ſeldom, if ever, reckoning with the Pariſhioners, but would return 'em ſome of her own Rights again, (being willing to pleaſe 'em;) and to many of the Poorer, the whole, often to her own loſs, keeping off Trouble from them; ready to adviſe and aſſiſt them in any Emergency that needed to be brought to her, or wherein ſhe thought ſhe could ſerve them. Seldom made unneceſſary Viſits, having Buſineſs enough in her Family, and the care of her own Soul to mind, ſo that ſhe had little time to ſpare. And on every occaſion apt to expreſs the reſigna-

reſignation of her Will to the Divine Pleaſure; as ſhe eſpecially did in her long and languiſhing Sickneſs, which was many times very painful; being extraordinary meek and patient under it to the laſt minute of her life, as little troubleſome certainly to thoſe about her, as ever any one was. And as ſhe ſhunn'd all Pomp and Ceremony through the whole Courſe of her life, ſo at her death, ſhe deſired to be carried to her Grave in quiet, without noiſe or the attendance of any but the Bearers and her own Servants; tho' we could not procure that for her.

2. *Such as have exceeded all that ever I knew of either Sexes*, namely her conſtant *Faſtings and Prayers*. By the former ſhe too much weakned her nature; and the latter was in a manner her continual employment, when ſhe could get leiſure from buſineſs. Some of the Family have ſuppos'd, ſhe always kept to ſix ſtated times of Prayer every day; but I have generally known it to be much oftner, eſpecially againſt a Sacrament. And ſhe rarely miſſed the Publick Prayers in her own Houſe, or at Church, for all thoſe Seven laſt Years that I have had the Honour to ſerve her in them: and her coming was not to gaze or muſe, but to join with the whole Service. In ſuch a frame of mind continued ſhe on to her death; diſpoſing her ſelf into an humble Poſture, when ſhe was not able to kneel, nor riſe when ſhe was down.

Laſtly, Having receiv'd the Abſolution of the Church, which ſhe earneſtly deſired, together with the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, ſhe departed this Life the 27*th* of *November* laſt paſt, in great Peace of Conſcience, and Univerſal Charity to all People. I conclude all with the Words of our Saviour, highly applicable in this Caſe,

Mat. 24. 46. *Bleſſed is that Servant, whom his Lord when he cometh ſhall find ſo doing.*

FINIS.

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